

M.O.R.E.
Regional Entities Subcommittee
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, April 23, 2015

Those Present:

Rep. Peggy Sayers, Sen. Paul Formica, Jeff Bridges, Rep. Theresa Conroy, Betsy Gara, John Filchak, Leo Paul, Carl Fortuna, Scott Gaul, Sam Gold, Richard Ives, Robert Labanara, Pat Llodra, Sheila McKay, Robert Namnoum, Jeff Otto, Lisa Pellegrini, Peter Foote, Jonathan Steinberg, Lyle Wray, Jeremy Zeedyk, Rep. Susan Johnson, Rep. John Hampton

Those Absent:

Carl Amento, Brian Anderson, Susan Bransfield, Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, Sen. Steve Cassano, Rep. Mike Demicco, John Elsesser, William Fritz, Rep. Bob Godfrey, Matthew Knickerbocker, Rep. Gail Lavielle, Cynthia Mangini, Steve McKeever, Bonnie Reemsnyder, Lena Rodriguez, Rep. Jason Rojas, Rep. Chris Rosario, Christine Ruman, Melissa Schlag, Donald Stein, Daniel Steward, Joyce Stille, Jeff Tomchik, Steve Vavrek, Jim Vigue, Stephen Woods, Rep. Tami Zawistowski

The meeting was called to order by Rep. Peggy Sayers at 10:10am and introduced Betsy Gara as the first presenter.

Betsy Gara gave a presentation on the issues associated with consolidating PSAPs.

Mike Muszynski followed up by discussing the issues related to HB-6970.

Rep. Peggy Sayers said that she believed the 40,000 population threshold to be too low for the purposes of regionalization because smaller towns have started regionalizing and the larger towns need to be encouraged to as well.

Pat Llodra stated that the benefits of consolidating PSAPs revolve around the savings from future hardware upgrades.

Jeff Otto expressed his support for HB-6970 because it will start the process of regionalization.

Rep. Sayers inquired into the optimal time frame for towns to regionalize.

Jeff Otto responded by saying that 3 years would be a sufficient interval, but the legislature should be flexible and give extensions within good reason.

Rep. Sayers thanked Jeff Otto for his comments.

Carl Fortuna stated that there would be no dark stations because there will be people to watch the prisoners and that the regional dispatch centers would have the best dispatchers.

Betsy Gara agreed with Carl Fortuna on the issues regarding dark stations.

Carl Fortuna stated that there would be numerous issues related to collective bargaining.

Lyle Wray brought up the option for a different model. He suggested an optional volunteer regional dispatch model that would allow towns to regionalize as they see fit.

Rep. Sayers said that many of the towns will be looking to regionalize because of budget constraints.

Leo Paul asked about where the 40,000 population threshold came from because he didn't believe that Litchfield County Dispatch served 40,000 people.

Jeff Otto answered by stating that LCD serves 97,000 and the LCD was formed from an existing subsidy.

John Filchak said that he believed that two towns collaborating did not constitute regionalization.

Jeremy Zeedyk expressed his desire to hear from a union perspective and see a report on the finances associated with upgrading capitol in dispatch centers.

Rep. Sayers said that Brian Anderson will present on behalf of the unions and Carroll Hughes will speak on behalf of the police chiefs.

Lyle Wray stated that he could ask the COG meeting group to gather the information regarding the finances of upgrading.

Pat Llodra added that there is the option of exploring the private sector as an alternative due to the complicated labor issues.

Rep. Sayers further expressed her desire to see regionalization because some towns have multiple dispatch centers.

Sam Gold said that there should be incentives for towns to join existing regional PSAPs and strengthen existing collaborations.

Mike Muszynski expressed his belief that the unique collaboration occurring in Waterford, East Lyme, and New London is a good approach and that the committee could benefit from observing their approach. He also stated that there are 9 multi-town PSAPs that exist that are under the 40,000 threshold.

Jeff Otto stated that 5 of the PSAPs are false multi-towns.

Rep. Sayers said that the burrows are related to the false multi-towns.

Jeff Otto was critical of how all burrows are given the same treatment.

Rep. Sayers introduced John Filchak as the next presenter.

John Filchak presented on NECCOG's regional paramedic program.

Rep. Sayers added that there are many towns that provide additional paramedic services.

John Filchak stated that a large part of the NECCOG population is on Medicaid and Medicare, which has led to issues when trying to attract a vendor.

Rep. Sayers noted that many people from Boston were buying homes from that area and consequently driving up the housing costs.

John Filchak said that there were issues involving the population influx.

Carroll Hughes introduced himself as the representative of the police chiefs and Chief Salvatore from the town of Cromwell.

Chief Salvatore supported the idea of exploring regional efficiencies and further explained that there are many existing regional police teams and programs. He also noted his concern for dark stations and how the committee is only examining 911 dispatches.

Carroll Hughes added that dispatch centers are very busy and he does not see the possibility for any efficiency to develop from regional dispatch centers.

Chief Salvatore said that he didn't see regionalization as beneficial.

Leo Paul stated that LCD is an effective regional entity.

Chief Salvatore responded by saying that LCD does not save the city of Torrington any money.

Leo Paul responded by saying that the efficiencies arise from other areas.

Chief Salvatore expressed his belief that regionalization provides no benefits.

Leo Paul said that the LCD is an effective model to be explored further.

Chief Salvatore replied by saying that it is not an effective model because it is not efficient to the municipalities.

Leo Paul said that the Torrington police chief believes the LCD to be very successful and asked Chief Salvatore to be open minded.

Rep. Sayers stated that the efficiencies revolve around the money saved when technology needs to be upgraded.

Chief Salvatore stated that there is a full functional new system in Torrington.

Carroll Hughes added that some towns were able to get the new equipment with the help of a state contract.

Chief Salvatore said that he believed that people would not accept the creation of dark stations.

Pat Llodra reminded the committee to continue to explore opportunities for consolidation when there is no loss of service. She then inquired into the possible regionalization of lock ups due to their expense.

Chief Salvatore said that there should be further exploration into the possibility of regionalizing lock ups and prisoner transportation. He further added that HB-6970 is too broad and creates too many issues for certain areas.

Carl Fortuna added that all services related to regionalizing police entities should be examined and further noted that one size does not fit all regarding HB-6970.

Carroll Hughes noted that there are certain police departments that experience significant variations in the number of calls they receive.

Leo Paul asked for Chief Salvatore's views on regionalizing police forces.

Chief Salvatore responded by saying that if the municipalities want to merge then they can.

Carroll Hughes agreed and added that there are some police departments that could be merged.

John Filchak added that if regionalized police departments are created, then the resident troopers would be replaced by regional officers.

Chief Salvatore said that regionalized police forces could save the towns a lot of money.

Carroll Hughes added that there are significant numbers of constables in some towns.

John Filchak added the costs would be cut significantly due to not funding resident troopers and from the regionalized capital.

Rep. Sayers stated that Leo Paul is chairing the subcommittee that is examining regionalized police departments.

Jeremy Zeedyk added that when there are emergencies additional people are brought in and further remarked on regionalized dispatches being possibly dangerous when people are unfamiliar with each other in an emergency.

Chief Salvatore stated that during an emergency the reduced number of personnel from a regionalized dispatch could be dangerous.

Carroll Hughes said that occasionally non-dispatchers become dispatchers and additional personnel become involved during crisis situations.

Rep. Sayers thanked all of the presenters and adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.